

1484. L. 27
A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BY THE

Rev. THOMAS JERVIS;

AND A

C H A R G E

DELIVERED BY THE

Rev. THOMAS BELSHAM;

AT THE

O R D I N A T I O N

OF THE

Rev. TIMOTHY KENRICK;

IN THE

NEW MEETING, EXETER,

On THURSDAY the 28th of JULY, 1785.

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S E R M O N

PREACHED BY THE

REV. THOMAS JEFFERSON

AND

C H A R L E S

DELIVERED BY THE

REV. THOMAS JEFFERSON



O R D E R

OF THE

REV. TIMOTHY KENNEDY

IN THE

NEW MEETING, EXETER

ON THURSDAY the 23d of JULY, 1852

L O N D O N

PRINTED BY JOHN MARSH

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M. D. C. C. L. V.

(This On the 23d)

The Blessing of Christ's Mission.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

O R D I N A T I O N

O F T H E

Rev. TIMOTHY KENRICK,

B Y

T H O M A S J E R V I S.

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S E R M O N



ORDINARY

OF THE

Rev. TIMOTHY KENNEDY

1858

THOMAS A. RYAN

A

S E R M O N.

HAD I consulted my own ease, or my own feelings, I should have wished to resign into abler hands, the office to which I am destined in the arrangement of this day's service; and to decline the honour of addressing you upon this interesting occasion. But it is with less reluctance that I comply with the request of my worthy Friend and Brother, on whose account we are now met together; since it affords me an opportunity of offering this publick testimony of my unfeigned esteem for Him, and of my lasting concern for the prosperity of the United Congregations of Protestant Dissenters, in this ancient and venerable City.

It would be justly deemed a fruitless and unimportant task, were I ever so competent to
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it, should I now seek to beguile your attention by an ostentatious parade of learning. I am conscious, it would be equally foreign from the purpose of the present solemnity, to employ your time in attempting to develop the subtleties of human wit and ingenuity; to point out the nice discriminations and dependencies of system; to trace the sublime researches of metaphysics, the abstract reasonings of philosophy, or the "oppositions of science falsely so called." Neither would it become me, should I feebly aim to captivate the imagination, and to mislead the judgment of my honoured Hearers, "with excellency of speech," and the "wisdom of words;" with the splendid embellishments of diction, and the fascinating powers of language. Much less should I stand acquitted to my own mind, if I were to involve you in any "strife about words to no profit;" or to interrupt the harmony of this friendly meeting, by introducing points of controversy and "doubtful disputation."—I hold it to be more suitable to the simplicity of the Gospel, "to speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts." It is much more consistent with
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the work of an Evangelist, "to put you in remembrance of those things that pertain to life and godliness ; even though you already know them, and be established in the present truth."— If I could, therefore, engage you to review the great purposes of Christianity, which lie open to the comprehension of every one that hears me, and which are the universal concern of Christians, of whatever denomination or party, of every age and profession ; this would be more consonant with my own duty and inclination ; nor would it, I presume, be incompatible with the views and expectations of any description of persons, in this numerous and respectable assembly.—You will, accordingly, allow me to recommend to your consideration,

Acts III. xxvi. which is the last verse.

Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

THE Apostles, Peter and John, are introduced to our notice, in this chapter, as joint labourers in the Gospel of peace. We here observe them entering upon the public profession

profession of the Ministry, which they had received in charge from the mouth of their great Master ; in a way, of all others, the most likely to prove successful, and to bring home to the hearts of men, the interesting truths of Christianity. By the solemn descent of the holy spirit, they had been recently invested with miraculous powers ; when an opportunity presents itself for the signal exercise of them, in the immediate restoration of a man, who was known to have been lame from his birth. This wonderful cure is performed in a conspicuous situation, “ at the gate of the Temple ;” and at a time of general resort, “ at the hour of Prayer.” It is no sooner accomplished, than the attention of the people is instantly awakened, and they are “ filled with wonder and amazement.” The publick curiosity is naturally raised to the highest pitch ; and after the first murmur of astonishment and applause, every eye becomes eagerly fixed upon the Apostles.—Under these circumstances it is, that Peter wisely determines to avail himself of the occasion that so aptly arises ; and to lead the minds of the people, already pre-disposed, to the contemplation of those important doctrines, which it was his duty and

and delight to inculcate. He is about to speak, and a general silence prevails. He addresses himself to the listening multitude so pointedly and so powerfully, with so much natural eloquence, and so much strength of argument, that he cannot fail to convince their understandings, and to penetrate their hearts. And scarcely are we surprized to hear, in the next chapter, of the extraordinary effect that is produced by this well-timed discourse; no less than five thousand persons being converted by it to the belief of Christianity.

The Apostle hath, in this instance, exhibited to our view, nay, he hath held up to the imitation of Christian Ministers, a most excellent model of Christian Preaching. His incomparable *Sermon*, as it may be justly styled, is solid, judicious, and argumentative. It is, at the same time, animated, pathetic, and sublime. It glows with all that generous ardour, it is pregnant with that manly zeal, which are eminently characteristic of this Apostle's temper; and which ought to inspire the breast of every Preacher of "the word of truth".

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He opens his discourse, by disclaiming, with a genuine humility, all title to those popular distinctions that might be shewn to himself and his colleague, St. John, on account of the miracle they had wrought; since they were but instruments of the divine power, and merely the secondary causes of this astonishing effect; which he attributes to the virtue of that supernatural gift which had been conferred upon them; and to the efficacy of a steady faith in the name of Jesus Christ—

“ that son of the God of their fathers, whom they had delivered up, and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go; that holy and just one, whom they had renounced in favour of a thief and a murderer;” that prince of life, whom they had unjustly sacrificed to their own groundless resentment, as an impostor and a deceiver of the people; but to whom God had given an undoubted testimony of his divine mission and character, by raising him from the dead—of which fact they had been witnesses; and which they were ready boldly to attest, in the face of a prejudiced and unbelieving world.

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The force of this application, who could evade? The pungency of it, who could with-stand? It was wonderfully adapted to strike, to rouse, and to convict their minds. It might well have covered their faces with the blush of conscious guilt; it might have filled their breasts with inward anguish and remorse. — But having probed the wound to the quick, he neglects not to relieve, and to heal; he acts the part of a tender and skilful physician, in prescribing the most efficacious remedies, the most salutary means of recovery. He consoles them with the assurance that their case is not desperate; encourages them to hope in the mercy of God through faith in his Son; and points out to them the path of life. He then winds up the whole, by reminding them of their manifold privileges; obviously inferring, that, since they had been very highly distinguished above all other nations upon earth, it was peculiarly incumbent upon them to “repent, and be converted;” and that they had the most powerful motives to the practice of righteousness.—“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, and

in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Unto you, *therefore*, first, God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

The words of the text naturally lead us to consider, First, the *Author* of that goodness and benevolence which were manifested to the world in the mission of Jesus Christ—Secondly, the *Design* of his coming, namely, "to bless us" and, Thirdly, the *Means* by which he accomplished this merciful design.—And in this view of it, the doctrine of the text constitutes a subject which it cannot be improper to insist upon before Christian Ministers; whose important aim it is, to inculcate and enforce this fundamental doctrine, so essential to the faith and the hope of all Christian People. This is, indeed, the most interesting subject of Preaching, and of Hearing.

I. We are to consider GOD as the *Author* of that mercy, which was manifested to the world in the mission of Jesus Christ; as the *source* and *origin* of those blessings which we derive from it.

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In regard to the Apostle's phrase, *raised up*, it may be observed that, in the 22d verse, the same word is used in the original, as well as in our version ; and precisely in the same sense ; " A prophet shall the Lord your God *raise up* unto you, of your brethren, like unto me." Accordingly, in the connection of the text, no more is to be understood by it, than the appointment, or designation of Jesus Christ to his office. " God, having raised up, *or appointed*, his Son Jesus *to be your Redeemer*, sent him to bless you." He was, therefore, distinguished by the divine appellations of *the Messiah*, or *the Sent*; and *the Christ*, *the Anointed* of God !—The proofs of the heavenly mission and authority of Jesus, are ample, strong, and convincing. They are deduced from various incontestible evidences ; from the exact completion of many ancient Prophecies in him ; from the extraordinary power of his Miracles ; from the sublime nature of his Doctrines ; from his triumphant Resurrection and Ascension ; and from the wonderful success of his Religion. It would carry us beyond the limits of our time, to enter into this copious and important subject. We must, therefore,

therefore, confine ourselves, at present, to the plan which was just now proposed.

And the idea that first occurs to the mind, and strongly impresses it, on the perusal of the text, is, the unmerited Love of God to a sinful and disobedient world. We are here led to contemplate the gospel-scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ, as *originating* with God our Creator. And hence we naturally look up to Him as the grand source of that clemency, which hath been wonderfully manifested towards the human race. He is described as the first mover, the supreme agent in the business of our salvation. We must, therefore, take heed, that we do not conceive of our Maker, as a Being severe and inexorable in his nature; arbitrary and implacable in his displeasure; as with-holding his mercy from penitent offenders; slow to admit them to terms of reconciliation; and reluctantly prevailed upon, by the interposition of a powerful Mediator, to save them from impending destruction. The scriptures inculcate far more worthy and exalted notions of the great Parent of mankind. They represent

sent Him under a more amiable and endearing character ; declaring that “ God is Love,”—as if this benign quality were his characteristic attribute, and constituted the chief glory of the divine nature ! He is, indeed, to the finally wicked and impenitent, “ a consuming fire”—but, to the broken and the contrite heart, He is “ slow to anger—plenteous in mercy—abundant in goodness—forgiving iniquity :” He is “ not willing that any should perish.” The sentiment of the text is strongly expressed in several other passages : For example ; “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” And emphatically saith the Apostle, “ All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.”—It was GOD, who originally concerted a plan for promoting our eternal happiness ; a plan most worthy of his infinitely wise and benevolent mind. It was GOD, who *sent his Son to bless us !*—To GOD, therefore, we must direct our primary and our principal regards ; for to His unbounded benignity are we indebted for all our hopes of mercy and salvation.

salvation. Herein is exhibited to us the most substantial and unequivocal proof of His unparalleled grace and condescension, of His disinterested kindness and compassion to the children of men. "Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." How, then, can we sufficiently venerate and adore the love of God, as displayed in the redemption of man ! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !"

II. The *Design* of Christ's mission is briefly, but distinctly stated in these words ; "God sent his Son to bless you" — *to bless you*, in the largest and the noblest extent of the phrase. Jesus was divinely commissioned, to impart knowledge to the ignorant, and salvation to the humble and sincere penitent ; to dispense peace, liberty, and life to the world ; to effect the recovery of those who were lost in error, and vice ; and in one emphatical comprehensive, word, *to Bless them !*—And particularly may the author of our salvation be said to *Bless* mankind

mankind, *by turning them from their iniquities*—by assuring them of pardon upon their repentance—by making the happy discovery to them of a resurrection from the dead, and a restoration to life and immortality.

He came to bless mankind, in the first instance, “ *by turning them from their iniquities.*” This is, indeed, the only benefit we find specified by the Apostle; which seems to imply, that it is a benefit of such magnitude and moment, so important in its nature, so advantageous and extensive in its effects, that it may be justly considered as the basis of all those other privileges which we derive from this source; as the first step towards obtaining the favour of God, and the hope of eternal felicity. The words, indeed, are not to be literally understood, as if Christ had actually “turned *all men* from their iniquities”—but as intimating, that he employed every wise and reasonable method, to awaken their minds to a sense of their guilt, to apprize them of their danger, and to prevail upon them to “turn from their transgressions, that iniquity might not be their

their ruin." This is stated as the great object, and the blessed tendency of his appearing, in many parts of scripture; particularly, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And it was declared of this illustrious person, at his first introduction and appearance in the world, that, by way of eminence and distinction, "His name should be called J E S U S"—because, according to the original and characteristic import of that appellation, "He should s A V E his people from their sins!" It was his exalted and disinterested aim, not only to save men from the punishment of sin, for this would have fallen far short of the purity and benevolence of his views; but also, to liberate them from its baleful and destructive power.

Various are the evils, the disorders, and the maladies, that have been introduced amongst men, by their own irregular appetites, their ill-directed desires, and their ungovernable passions. And truly wretched and deplorable was the condition of our race—till our great Deliverer came, to reclaim us from the paths of wickedness,

ness, to rescue us from wretchedness and woe; to restore us to happiness, to virtue, and to God. "He was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.—Him hath God highly exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour"—to bestow upon his faithful subjects, advantages more solid and durable than have ever been conferred by those warriors, statesmen, or potentates of the earth, who have, by martial enterprizes, or sagacious counsels, advanced the splendor and prosperity of their country. The honours and immunities obtained for us by the Prince of peace, are not like the transitory glories of the world, which quickly fade and pass away; but they are substantial, sublime, and eternal. The conquests of the Saviour of mankind, were not directed to the subjugation of kingdoms; for "his kingdom is not of this world." The institutes of this divine Law-giver have not for their object, the policy, regulation, and establishment of little earthly states; but their benign influences extend to the future welfare, the everlasting existence of the human soul. It was more consonant with the wisdom,
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purity, and dignity of his perfect and spiritual administration, to quell the rebellious tumults of passion, to controul the lawless motions of the heart, to subdue the oppressive power of evil habit, to destroy the arbitrary dominion of vice.

A release from the unhappy bondage, a deliverance from the cruel despotism of sin, is an invaluable blessing indeed. Sin is an evil of infinite turpitude and malignity; totally subversive of the order and tranquillity of our minds; tending to involve us in complicated guilt, misery, and shame. It contaminates the heart, poisons all internal comfort, and becomes the bane of every enjoyment. Its galling yoke intralls the mind, and debases the faculties. It binds the moral and intellectual powers of man in the most rigid and dishonourable fetters. What, then, is more devoutly to be wished, than, being freed from the unmanly servitude of sin, to partake of the glorious liberty of the sons of God? What rational mind is not solicitous to exchange a master so arbitrary, subtle, and austere, for one whose yoke is so easy, whose burthen so light, whose service is perfect freedom?

Thus,

Thus, freedom from the slavery of sin is, in itself, highly desirable; and still more so, if it be considered as leading to the happiest consequences. For it must be observed further, that "God sent his Son to bless us," not only "*by turning us from our iniquities;*" but, by assuring us of his *mercy and pardon* upon our sincere *repentance*. The forgiveness of sin is a privilege peculiar to the Christian revelation; for here only is it explicitly declared, and fully ascertained. The Heathens, though they spoke highly of the rewards of virtue, had no just conceptions of this doctrine; and the Jews had but very indistinct notions concerning it. This is a generous plant, which owes its production to the more kindly temperature of the Gospel-dispensation. Hereby is the promise of pardon held forth to all who come unto God, through Christ, sincerely confessing, and resolutely forsaking their sins; to all who "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."—For it must not be forgotten, that those only can attain to the well-grounded hope of mercy, who strictly adhere to the unalterable tenor of that covenant, which is well
ordered

ordered in all things, and sure. This indispensably requires, that, to our faith in Christ, and in the truth of his religion, we add an unfeigned Repentance, and a persevering Obedience. These are the only limitations that the Gospel knows.—And such is its diffusive benevolence, that it offers terms of salvation, under the restrictions above specified, to all men: “Glory, honour, and peace, saith St. Paul, to every man that worketh good ; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”—To the Jew *first*, according to the text. And this was consistent with the wise œconomy of providence with respect to this people, from the beginning ; it was agreeable to the uniform predictions of former times ; it was conformable to the command and example of Jesus, who declares that he himself was “not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This, however, is the charge which he gave to his disciples, “Go ye, and teach all nations !” And accordingly, “repentance and remission of sins were preached unto all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*” So that the privileges of the Gospel were not to be confined within the narrow bounds of the Jewish

Jewish nation ; but to be extended to the whole human race, to Gentiles as well as Jews ; “ for there is, in reality, no difference between the Jew and the Greek. God is no respect^r of persons ; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” e

In the divine favour and forgiveness, are comprehended more blessings than can here be enumerated. But they may all be summed up in the glorious assurance which is given us, by the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of a *Resurrection* from the dead, and a happy *restoration to immortal life*. Only a feeble and a glimmering light had, as yet, been cast upon this interesting subject. The most enlightened amongst mankind had been, hitherto, lost and bewildered in their speculations and reasonings about it. But, at the illustrious advent of the Messiah, the sun of righteousness arose, like the brightness of the morning, to dispel the mist that overshadowed the intellectual world, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and to lead them in the way everlasting. The clear ideas we possess of a future state, and

a general resurrection, we owe to the Christian religion. Its great author hath not left us to " sorrow as those that have no hope." He hath enabled us, by the eye of faith, to look beyond the bounds of this transitory world, *beyond the visible diurnal sphere* ; hath brought Heaven itself to our view ; hath extended our prospects into distant and everlasting ages ; and hath made manifest things that were kept secret from the foundation of the world. " The wages of sin is Death"—*Death*, in the most awful sense of the word. But Christ " hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." This was the grand, the ultimate design of his coming—to deprive death of his sting, and disarm him of his power, by giving us the joyful hope, and a full assurance of the resurrection of the body to *an incorruptible life*, a state of perpetual existence, which will never be subject to dissolution and decay ; where " this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality."—Without this hope and assurance, how limited had still been our views, how destitute our present condition ! how rugged the path of life ! how uneasy

easy the bed of death ! how dreary the recesses of the grave ! and beyond it—what a dismal void of doubt, uncertainty and darkness ! But, “ looking for the blessed hope ” of a Resurrection, what a glorious and astonishing change is produced in the feelings, the desires, and the prospects of man ! The face of nature is no longer gloomy and dejected. Every object around us assumes a chearful and animated appearance. Our own hearts are elevated with wonder and delight, and inspired with the most sublime and ardent hopes, with hopes full of immortality—while we steadfastly “ look unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith ; ” who, upon occasion of one of the most extraordinary and significant miracles he ever performed, declared of himself, in language the most consolatory, sublime, and affecting—“ I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die ! ”

“ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath *thus* blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ! ”

How

How truly is it asserted, that “ *God sent him to bless us !* ” And he hath fully and faithfully executed his commission. He hath left nothing undone, that might advance the honour and the happiness of human nature. He “ hath given us everlasting consolation.” He hath diffused light through the world, hath established “ peace where there was no peace,” and hath ascertained to man the hope of immortality.

But it is natural and obvious to enquire,

III. By what *Means* Christ hath fulfilled the gracious purposes, and the important offices of his mission.

“ God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless mankind, by turning them from their iniquities.” And this salutary design, as already illustrated, the Son of God hath promoted by his heavenly *Doctrine*, and his divine *Instructions*. — “ God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” He was anointed of God, “ to preach good tidings to the meek—to proclaim
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claim the acceptable year of the Lord." Accordingly, "he went through every city and village, preaching, and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." And, by his Gospel, he still speaks to succeeding generations "the words of eternal life." This reveals to us where our true happiness lies, and points out the noblest rewards to animate us in the pursuit of it. Its Doctrines and Discoveries improve our faculties, and elevate and enlighten our minds; for they disclose to us the "hidden treasures of wisdom," conduce to our proficiency in all useful and divine knowledge, and are "able to make us wise unto salvation." The Rules and Precepts of Christianity are infinitely beneficial to man; wisely calculated to serve his highest interests, to promote his eternal advantage. They have a happy tendency to reform the manners, to regulate the affections, to improve the understanding, and to mend the heart. Its Motives and Encouragements are admirably adapted to the circumstances of human nature, to its wants, its frailties, and its imperfections. The Christian Religion affords its professors an inexhaustible store of comfort and joy; it proves

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their surest relief in trouble ; their refuge in the hour of temptation ; their guardian, conductor, and guide, through the intricate mazes of life. It is powerfully and pathetically addressed to the internal principles and affections of the human breast. It warmly interests our hopes and our fears. It adopts every argument that is most likely to work upon our minds with force and conviction. Its threatnings alarm us with foreboding terrors ; while its alluring promises captivate and delight us. It now reproves, and now expostulates with transgressors. It alternately warns, and invites those who have unhappily strayed from the peaceful paths of innocence. In short, the Gospel will be found to contain “ the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ ;” and, by the careful study and perusal of them, we may attain to the excellent things of religion and true godliness, “ through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” For, the energy that accompanied the wise doctrines which our Master taught, and the excellent precepts he delivered, was such as abundantly justified the assertion—that “ never man spake like this man !”

But

But there is nothing better than the silent eloquence of *Example*—no speech, nor language more forcible, interesting, and instructive. There is nothing that can so effectually recommend any system of religion ; nothing, exclusive of its own intrinsic worth, that can render it so “worthy of all acceptance,” as the amiable and unblameable Character of it’s author . This carries with it undeniable evidence, and the strongest conviction. Nor was this wanting here.—The perfect purity and excellence of our Saviour’s Life, gave a sanction to every thing he said, and proved him to be “a Teacher sent from God.” His Actions were the best comment upon his Laws. He, therefore, said to his disciples, “I am your Example!”—And he hath exhibited, in his own conduct, an uniform pattern of obedience, which is highly consonant with the dignity of his office, strictly conformable to the divine tendency of his doctrines, and most worthy of our imitation. The Example of Christ was, indeed, absolutely necessary, and abundantly conducive, to the accomplishment of his embassy. It was of the utmost weight in establishing the truth of

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of his religion, in promoting the success of his Gospel, in forming the minds of men to virtuous principles, and virtuous habits. The Example, then, which he hath set before us, let us faithfully copy; for it is a model of complete virtue. The steps of this divine Leader let us implicitly follow—He will prove a safe and infallible guide.

The *Sufferings* and *Death* of Christ were, likewise, of essential importance in executing the plan of our redemption. Sufferings give scope to the exercise of many virtues, and are naturally productive of the genuine graces of the Christian temper. Those which Jesus endured were, beyond example, various, acute, and distressing. He was eminently “a man of sorrows, and intimately acquainted with grief.—He came unto his own, but his own received him not.” His life exhibits an uninterrupted scene of persecution, and the most ungrateful treatment; from which he found no sanctuary in his own innocence, no security even in the mercy and clemency of his god-like designs. It constitutes a history of accomplished and transcendent merit, calmly struggling with oppressions,

oppressions, afflictions, and temptations; and rising superior to them all, with a manly and unshaken constancy, with unexampled dignity and greatness of mind.—“ There are no sorrows like unto his.” His trials were such as are not common to men. They were accompanied with many circumstances of peculiar aggravation, which cannot occur to the rest of mankind; and he felt them all to a degree of extreme sensibility. Yet he bore the sternness of adversity with all the meekness of patience; with that mild and unaffected fortitude, which is the genuine effect of his religion. He sustained the infirmities of his nature, in a manner that exalted his character to the highest perfection of sublime and disinterested virtue. Thus did the captain of our salvation “ learn obedience by the things which he suffered.” And thus he hath, for our comfort, edification, and encouragement, “ left us an example” of patience in tribulation, of forbearance amidst unheard-of injuries, of contentment in poverty, of resignation under complicated distresses, and of heroic firmness in the hour of temptation and trial.

But

But the Sufferings of our Saviour were not only painful in their nature and quality, they were also lasting as his life; and, at length, terminated in a most violent, excruciating, and ignominious *Death*. In the near prospect of this awful trial, he was moved with uncommon anguish of spirit, and his "soul was troubled." Yet did he not seek to recede from the solemn and decisive conflict; nor did his matchless love and philanthropy forsake him in his last hour. But, "having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." He knew that "it behoved him thus to suffer," and through the gates of death to enter into glory. "For this cause, said he, came I unto this hour!"—He, therefore, submitted to the agonizing pains, and tasted the bitterness of death, for our sakes. "He endured the Cross, despising the shame!"

The efficacy and importance of this signal proof of his obedience even unto Death, is manifest from the whole tenor of the New Testament. By dying, he gave an undoubted testimony of his love to men, and his desire of their salvation; he confirmed the truth of the doctrines he had taught; he exhibited a lively and affecting

ing illustration of the evil and malignity of sin ; he offered up himself for us ; and furnished us with the most powerful and animating motives to piety and patience.

He thus taught, and lived, and died—in order to take away sin, to promote the cause of universal righteousness, to dispense the inestimable blessings of pardon, and eternal Life to the world.

However, the business of our salvation was not finally accomplished, but by the *Resurrection* of Jesus, and his *Ascension* into Heaven. In these very extraordinary events, he hath given us a seal and confirmation of the divinity of his mission and doctrine ; the fullest assurance of his ability to save ; the clearest evidence of the possibility, and a sacred pledge of the certainty of our own resurrection unto life. He was, indeed, “ delivered for our offences ; but was raised again for our justification”. He was “ put to death in the flesh ; but quickened by the spirit”. He fell a victim to the inexorable tyrant of the grave ; but this rendered his succeeding conquest over the powers of the unseen world,
more

more glorious and decisive. He died—but he arose again ; arose triumphant, exalted, and divine ! “ It is Christ that died, saith St. Paul, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, and maketh intercession for us”. And he is elsewhere represented by the same Apostle, as “ now appearing in the presence of God for us” ; as, in his state of exaltation and glory, still exerting himself on our behalf, and preparing for us an everlasting inheritance in heaven.

We have now taken a general view of the Benefits resulting from the divine mission of Jesus, and of the method of salvation which is proposed to us by him ; a subject which comprehends “ the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ”. And this is the Gospel which is preached unto you. — It remains, therefore, to conclude this discourse, by exhorting you, Christians, above all things, to prize, and wisely to improve the advantages you enjoy for religious instruction ; and to manifest your regard to “ the word of life”, by your kind and affectionate treatment of
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Those who are engaged in dispensing it; so far as they shall be found faithful to the trust reposed in them.

It was the last command of our Lord to his disciples, previous to his ascension, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!" In order wisely to diffuse and extend the blessings of his mission, he "gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers. And, to carry on the same valuable purposes, is the Christian Ministry established amongst you at this day. To "preach peace by Jesus Christ," to explain and illustrate the great principles of Christianity, is the liberal and laudable employment of the Ministers of Religion. If, then, you rightly estimate the worth and excellence of that Gospel "whereunto they are ordained Preachers," you will not, I am persuaded, deny them a patient and attentive hearing. If you wish to "profit by the word preached," you will cultivate a sincere and cordial affection for those that preach it. You will "know, and regard, those that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish

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nish you ; and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake." . And you will consider it as a duty more especially incumbent upon you, to treat your Ministers with kindness and respect, since they are the objects of your own free and unbiaſſed election. For it is your privilege, as Protestant Diſſenters, that you can appoint your own Paſtors and Teachers, without being ſubject to the interpoſition, controul, or authority, of any Eccleſiaſtical power upon earth. And I may here, without the imputation of flattery, obſerve, that you have ſhewn yourſelves worthy of this privilege, in the judicious choice you have made :—A choice, which does credit to your diſcernment ; and which muſt afford peculiar ſatisfaction to the mind of that excellent Perſon, who hath " laboured among you in word and doctrine," with great ability, diligence, and fidelity to his divine Maſter, and to you ; and for ſo long a ſucceſſion of years, that, like the Elders of the primitive churches, he is to be " accounted worthy of double honour." Though his publick ſervices have for ſome time ceaſed, he " yet ſpeaketh" to you in the perſuaſive, the animated language of example.

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He still continues to instruct you in the just and manly principles of your profession, as * Dissenters. He still aims to establish *the* † *grounds of your faith*, as Christians. His zeal for your welfare hath inclined him to bequeath you a living legacy (if I may use the expression) which will exist in your remembrance, as a grateful token of his esteem,
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* See the Dissenting Gentleman's Letters to the Rev. Mr White, 5th Edition. Buckland.

The reputation of these Letters is already too well established, to receive any additional weight from the opinion of an individual. Yet I cannot suffer this opportunity to pass, without observing, that no one should be unacquainted with them, who wishes to obtain information concerning the principles of Nonconformity in this country: And that, if this work were more generally and attentively read by those who dissent from the Established Church, it would tend to give permanence and vigour to their cause; and to preserve the rising generation, especially, from that indifference to their own principles, which so strongly marks the character of the present times; and which, in too many instances, terminates in a fatal neglect of all religion.

† The Grounds of Faith in Jesus Christ, briefly stated, &c. Addressed to a candid Society of Christians, at the close of his Ministrations among them. By Micajah Towgood.

long after he is gone to receive the reward of his labours—" whose faith follow, considering the end of his conversation !" — Whatever might otherwise have been thought of pronouncing his eulogium in this place ; yet, upon an occasion so particular as the Ordination of his Successor, it would have appeared to many of you, an improper omission, to have withheld the tribute that is due to your late venerable Pastor, on account of his distinguished merit as a Man, a Christian, and a Minister.

It is not my intention to enlarge here, upon the subject of those duties which you owe to " them that have the rule over you, and speak to you the word of God." Their discouragements, their labours, and their difficulties must necessarily occur to your minds. How far, in any other department of life, they might have a chance of sharing, with other men, in worldly honours and emoluments, I will not take upon me to determine. But, whatever prospects they might have, they cheerfully sacrifice them to what they consider as the cause of liberty and truth ; a cause the most honourable and worthy. They have the satisfaction

satisfaction to think, that they follow the dictates of conscience, in devoting themselves to the service of your souls. At the same time, they do not envy those, who, in the Established Church, possess advantages from which they themselves are excluded. Much less would they attempt to depreciate their character and worth. On the contrary, they are happy to declare, that they esteem many among them, as men of eminent learning and ability, and of distinguished honour, probity and virtue. Your ministers, indeed, though they do not encourage aspiring views of riches or ambition, are not insensible to the comforts and accommodations of life. Besides those exigencies and disquietudes which are incident to them in common with the rest of mankind; they are also liable to various inconveniencies, trials, and disappointments, peculiar to their situation and circumstances. But, while “none of these things move them;” while they dare not, on this account, “make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;” while they would not purchase the wealth of worlds, at the costly expence of integrity; while they are
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ready to give up those external advantages, which are commonly the objects of man's eager pursuit; and which certainly contribute to the ease and tranquillity of his present condition—they flatter themselves, that there are none of you, that will not shew them the willing testimony of gratitude, friendship, and esteem. They make no absurd and extravagant pretensions to supernatural, or infallible powers; nor have they recourse to those mean, unworthy, and unchristian arts, which are calculated to inspire weak and illiterate minds with awe. But, according “to the simplicity that is in Christ,” and with becoming ideas of the importance of that office which is committed to them by Him alone, “who is head over all things to his church”; they are earnestly solicitous to promote your highest happiness. To this end, they are, in the language of the Apostle, “ambassadors for Christ,” remonstrating with you in his name; and “workers together with him,” entreating you to “be reconciled to God, and beseeching you that ye receive not His grace in vain.”—Be admonished, therefore, Christians, to improve
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by the ministrations of the Gospel, while you enjoy them. Thus you will encourage and strengthen the hearts of your Ministers in their arduous work; and “they will be able to rejoice in the day of Christ, that they have not laboured amongst you in vain.” While they are faithful, and “approve themselves as the Ministers of God,” they have a claim to your friendly regards. And of these, you cannot give them a more satisfactory proof, than by attending their instructions with humble and teachable dispositions, with seriousness, regularity, and candour. If you do this, they will not think their services ill rewarded. They will persevere, with more comfort to themselves, because with more advantage to you, in exhorting you “not to be moved from the hope of the Gospel which ye have heard.” They will even be content to “endure hardships”—yea, to “endure all things for your sakes, that you may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

A C H A R G E



A
C H A R G E

DELIVERED at the ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. TIMOTHY KENRICK,

At E X E T E R,

JULY 28th, 1785;

And the Substance of which was afterwards

REPEATED at the ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. WILLIAM BROWNE,

At W R E X H A M,

AUGUST 24th, 1785,

By THOMAS BELSHAM.

A

C H A R C

WILLIAM BROWN



WILLIAM BROWN

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C H A R G E.

THERE are some who disapprove of the solemn service in which we are now engaged; and they assign reasons, which, if not substantial, are at least plausible. For my own part, I am not ashamed to avow, that a solemnity of this nature approves itself equally both to my understanding and my heart. When effectual care is taken to guard against superstitious errors, when an ordination service is represented not as conferring new powers, nor qualifying a minister to perform any part of ministerial duty, to which he was not before equally entitled; when it is understood on the part of the Minister ordained, as a solemn assumption of the sacred office, and a public profession of fidelity and diligence in the dis-

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charge

charge of it; on the part of the congregation in which he is settled, as a testimony of their desire that he should sustain the pastoral office amongst them, and that a divine blessing may accompany his labours, and also as an engagement to contribute, to the utmost of their power, to his comfort and usefulness; and when it is further considered, on the part of the Ministers who attend and officiate upon the occasion, as a public expression of their cordial approbation of the qualifications, views, and character of the minister ordained, and an affectionate commendation of him, of his labours, and of his flock to the protection and blessing of the great Head of the Church; considered in this light, an Ordination Service appears to me not only reasonable in itself, but in the highest degree pleasing and instructive, and calculated to make the most useful and permanent impressions upon the heart.

The province assigned to me upon this occasion I should have accepted with great reluctance, had not early and long continued habits of intimacy, and various important and endearing connexions pleaded my apology, or rather rendered it impossible to refuse the opportunity

portunity of friendship, and had not the opportunity which this service affords of bearing my public testimony from long experience, to the abilities, furniture, and excellent character of my reverend brother, in some degree reconciled me to a task, which upon many accounts is painful.

Nor is it to be supposed, Sir, that you need any advice or exhortation which I can suggest, to excite you to a faithful and diligent discharge of your ministerial duty. I am well assured of the contrary. You are too well apprized of the nature and important ends of the pastoral office, and your heart is too deeply impressed with love to God and the Redeemer, and compassion to immortal souls, to need any instruction or exhortation of mine upon this subject. I should be ashamed to appear to dictate to you. I mean only to remind you of a few particulars which the solemnity of the service may perhaps tend to impress upon your mind, so far as they approve themselves to your understanding; and which, though the nature of the discourse requires that they should be particularly addressed to you, I would humbly recommend to the attention of my reverend brethren who are
present

present upon this occasion, so far as they may judge them to be just and useful ; and I would especially desire that they may be brought home to my own bosom, and impressed deeply upon my own heart.

And I know not a more important advice which can be addressed to a Minister, than that which the apostle Paul, under the apprehension of speedy dissolution, addresses to his chosen friend and companion, the evangelist Timothy, and to which I would beg leave to direct your attention upon the present occasion,

2 Tim. ii. 15. " Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

And here, Sir, permit me, in conformity to the method of the text, to offer a few plain hints of advice,

I. Respecting the grand object you should keep in view in the discharge of your office,

II. Respecting the general character you should be ambitious to acquire ; and

III. Concerning

III. Concerning the means you should adopt for the attainment of these important ends.

First, Allow me, Sir, to recommend to you that through the whole course of your ministry, you study to shew yourself approved unto God. Let this grand object be kept continually in view, and let it be pursued with the utmost vigour and perseverance.

The approbation of God, Sir, you well know to be an object of infinite importance. It often varies indeed from that of fallible creatures, but it is always founded upon truth : It arises from perfect and comprehensive views of actions, characters, and motives ; it is the highest honour that a creature can enjoy ; it is sure, in the end, to secure the approbation of all whose approbation is real praise ; it is ever accompanied by an approving conscience, that sweetest balm of life ; and what is of the most consequence, the approbation of God, is the foundation of all true, substantial, and permanent peace, both here and hereafter. To be approved of God, is to be honourable and happy, both for time and eternity.

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Let me then intreat, Sir, that whatever you do, in your ministerial capacity, you keep the approbation of God continually in view ; in all your researches after truth ; in all your private studies preparatory for your public ministrations ; in all your pastoral visits for instruction, admonition, and consolation ; in catechising the young and ignorant ; in your addresses at the throne of mercy ; in all your public discourses ; in your administration of the ordinances of the gospel ; and in the universal tenor of your conduct, let this be the grand object after which you aspire, to shew yourself approved unto God. Let this rational and sublime principle associate itself with every spring of action in your breast, and allow it a commanding influence over the whole of your behaviour. It will dignify every action ; it will consecrate every thought.

And take great care that no other principle may stand in competition with this. You cannot but be solicitous to acquire the esteem of those with whom you are connected. The desire of a good name has ever been the characteristic of an ingenuous and liberal mind. It would be a shame to be insensible to the refined
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and exquisite satisfaction which arises from the approbation of the worthy and the good. The love of praise, in a limited degree, is a sentiment which the christian Minister need not blush to avow. The wise man affirms that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and christianity itself requires its professors to live honestly, ^(a) that is, honourably; that is, to conduct themselves in such a manner as to secure a good character in the world; and St. Paul appears to have been very anxious to clear his reputation from the malicious aspersions of his enemies. A good character is essential both to the comfort and the usefulness of a christian Minister; and the apostle John records it to the honour of his friend Demetrius, that he had a good report of all men, as well as of the truth itself.

I doubt not therefore, Sir, that you will acquit yourself in such a manner in the discharge of your office, as to secure the affection of your people, the esteem of your brethren in the ministry, and the good report of the world. You will not disdain to shew yourself approved even to the least and feeblest of your flock; and I am confident that you will aim to
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(a) Rom. xiii. 13.

behave with such propriety, dignity, and circumspection, that even your enemies, if such you should have, may not be able to impeach your character.

But yet, Sir, allow me to remind you, that there is an object infinitely more valuable than the praise of man; and that is, the approbation of God, whose judgment is ever according to truth, and whose favour is better than length of days : Whenever therefore these objects come into competition, I trust you will not hesitate a moment which to prefer.

But can they ever be incompatible with each other? Undoubtedly they may : For man judgeth by the outward appearance, but the Lord searcheth the heart ; and we read of some that fell into condemnation, because they valued the praise of men more than the praise of God. It is a very supposable case, that circumstances may occur, in which the Christian Minister, whose supreme ambition it is to approve himself to God, may find himself obliged to act in a manner, which may expose him to the censure and the pity of his friends, and to the scorn
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and ridicule of the world—a cruel trial—to a generous and feeling mind, *far worse to bear than violence*. And in such circumstances, Sir, should they occur, if you would shew yourself approved unto God, you must be content, like your divine Master before you, to bear the Cross and to despise the shame; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the earth, and the favour and approbation of God, as ample compensation for the frowns of the world.

Study to shew yourself approved unto God. You well know, Sir, that the original word (^a) is very emphatical; that it expresses great eagerness of desire, and vigour of exertion in order to attain the object proposed. Let me then exhort you, Sir, to keep this important end continually in view: Be vigorous, resolute, and uniform in your endeavours to secure it: Suffer no inferior object to divert your attention: Spare no pains, regard no difficulties, and fear no dangers in the pursuit of it: And if the question should be asked, what is the motive by which you are principally influenced in the discharge of your ministerial duty, be ever ready to reply, that it is not to gratify the love of

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(a) σπουδαστος.

ease, the lust of wealth, of fame, of pleasure, or of power; that it is not to amuse the fancy with splendid images, nor to occupy the mind with abstract and sublime speculations, but that you may shew yourself approved unto God. Lightly as the world may hold this principle of conduct, I am persuaded, Sir, that you are well convinced that it is the most rational, the most worthy, and the most sublime that can influence the human heart. And you are well apprized, that you have enlisted yourself in the service of the best of masters, who will eventually appear to honour those who thus honour him; who will not suffer his faithful servants to fail of their reward; and who will repay a thousand fold, every sacrifice they may be called to make in his cause.

* Permit me now, Sir, to suggest a few hints,

Secondly, Concerning the general character you should be ambitious to acquire, viz. that of a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.

In the first place, Sir, let me recommend it to you to aspire after the character of a workman; an active, laborious, indefatigable Minister of the gospel.

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There are some who conceive of the ministry as an idle office, requiring no exertion, and answering no valuable end : And would to God there were not some, who, assuming the character of Christian Ministers, do, by their deplorable and criminal neglect of the duties of their office, and of the souls committed to their care, give plausibility to the charge. These are hireling shepherds, who care not for the flock ; they are lovers of pleasure, and lovers of gain, more than lovers of souls ; they are sleeping centinels, who will not sound the alarm, even when the enemy is at the very gate. But in a little while, the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them, and terrible indeed will be their account.

For truly, Sir, such is not the light in which impartial reason teacheth us to view the sacred office ; such are not the representations which the gospel gives ; and such, I am very confident, are not your apprehensions of this most important, most arduous work. I am well assured, Sir, that you consider the ministry as an office of the greatest moment ; for indeed what can be of greater importance than to rescue immortal spirits from the bondage of sin, and from the
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jaws of hell, and to train them up to wisdom, to holiness, and to immortal happiness ! Compared with this, how trifling those objects which are usually deemed momentous ! how unimportant those occupations which provide for the support of the animal life, which restore health to the diseased body, which extend the limits of the human understanding, which elevate and transport the soul, or even those which regulate the interests of civil society, and diffuse liberty, and plenty, and order, and peace, through populous and extensive empires ! For he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, hath saved a soul from death.

In the success of your undertaking, Sir, you must feel yourself very deeply interested, when you recollect that the doctrine you preach is not a matter of amusement, or of indifference, but that it will certainly prove to all your hearers a favour either of life unto life, or of death unto death. They will either be saved by the wise improvement of your faithful instructions, or their final ruin will be doubly aggravated by their criminal neglect of them. O how earnest, how affectionate, will this consideration render you in your addresses to them, and in your labours for their salvation !

Especially

Especially when you consider farther, how intimately your own future honour and felicity are connected with the success of your ministry, so far as this depends upon your vigilance and activity in the discharge of your duty. What joy, what triumph will it be another day to meet those souls which have been saved through your generous exertions on their behalf! But oh! what will it be to have the blood of souls required at your hands, if any of your hearers should be lost through your neglect! The supposition is so terrible that I will not for one moment indulge it. I am confident there is nothing in the world you would so much deprecate and dread. I am confident there is no pains you would not willingly take, there is no hardship you would not willingly endure, to escape so awful a catastrophe.

Now, Sir, you are well apprized, that in order to the honourable, the comfortable, and the successful discharge of this important office, it is essentially requisite that a Minister should possess good natural talents, competent learning, a sound judgment, with a courageous and well regulated zeal. It is also of great importance that he should be intimately conversant with
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the human heart; that he should be well acquainted with the most insinuating and powerful methods of address; that he should know how to strip vice of her alluring garb, and to represent her in all her native deformity and horror; and that he should be able to set forth truth and wisdom in their most engaging form, so as to win the hearts of his hearers, and to bend their wills to the gentle yoke of the gospel; that he should ever be watchful to do good, and to apply instruction, encouragement, admonition, or consolation, in that manner which may most effectually answer the end proposed. But surely all this will require the most anxious attention, the most indefatigable exertion. If, therefore, you are desirous to fulfil your course with honour and joy, if you are solicitous to answer the great end of your ministry in the salvation of your own soul, and of those who hear you, forgive, Sir, the freedom which I take to intreat and charge you in this view, that you study to shew yourself approved unto God, as a worthy labourer in the province assigned you, a faithful active Minister of the gospel of Christ.

Approve

Approve yourself a workman that *needeth not to be ashamed*. If you look into the original, Sir, you will perceive that the apostle's expression ^(a) is very general and comprehensive. It signifies either a workman who is not himself ashamed, or who needeth not to be ashamed, or who doth not cause shame.

First, study to approve yourself a workman not ashamed of the gospel you profess. Though the doctrine of the Cross has ever been to some a stumbling block, and to others foolishness; and though a sincere regard to the christian religion will, in this age of scepticism, expose you to the sneer of the half-thinking infidel, I am well assured that none of these things will move you. That the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, to every one who believeth and obeyeth it, is a truth in an assent to which you are upon the best grounds firmly established; and so that by an open and courageous profession of it you may obtain from your divine Master that he may not be ashamed of you in that day when he shall appear in his glory, you will despise the silly scoffs of ignorance, and will even rejoice if you are counted worthy to suffer shame in so glorious a cause.

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(a) ἀντιστοιχῶν.

I add farther,—Be not ashamed of avowing, upon every proper occasion, those principles which you hold to be true and important. You will not, I trust, misapprehend me, nor suppose that I mean to recommend an officious obstruction of obnoxious opinions upon every occasion, and in every company. No, Sir, what I would recommend is, that having sought after truth with diligence and impartiality, having formed your sentiments from the most comprehensive views of rational and scriptural evidence, and cherishing the most cordial and diffusive charity for those who think they see reason to differ from you in opinion, you should at the same time possess a decent firmness in the support of what you apprehend to be important truth ; and that you should not be intimidated from a manly avowal, and a sober, rational defence of it, either by the authority of the learned, the ridicule of sceptics, or the prejudices of the illiterate. It may perhaps bear a question, whether the cause of truth has suffered most by the open attack of its enemies, or the timid reserve of its friends. Be it your honour, Sir, to approve yourself the faithful, zealous votary of truth, and resolutely to follow the footsteps of this sacred guide, though she
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conduct you into difficult and unfrequented paths where few have the wisdom or the courage to attend her; convinced that the path of truth and integrity will eventually prove to be the path of honour, and of peace; and that the feeble glimmering of the morning will issue in a perfect and a glorious day.

Be not ashamed of your office. Though fools often pour contempt upon the ministry, yet surely every wise and benevolent man must admit, that it is the greatest honour in the world to be employed in serving the best interests of our fellow-creatures. You, Sir, I am persuaded, will magnify your office, and will, I trust, never be ashamed of appearing under the honourable character of a Minister of the Gospel, a steward of the mysteries of God, an ambassador of Christ, beseeching men in Christ's stead, that they be reconciled to God.

Nor will you hesitate to avow, upon every proper occasion, the denomination of Christians with which you are connected. And while, upon what you apprehend to be the most rational and scriptural grounds, you take leave to dissent from the established church; while you entertain

and profess the most liberal charity for men of real worth, who continue conscientious members of that communion ; you will, at the same time, disdain in any company, or upon any occasion, to assume the appearance of a character that is not properly your own, in order to avoid the stigma which is usually fixed upon those who bravely dare to avow their dissent from a church established by law. While you consider the dissenting cause as the cause of liberty and truth, you will not be ashamed of openly ranking yourself under its standard, though few of the great, the learned, the fashionable, or the wise will venture to resort thereto : And I am persuaded that you will agree in the truth of the observation, that there is nothing which renders a man more truly contemptible, than an unworthy shame of avowing his principles. But here, Sir, you will permit me to suggest a hint, not for your caution, for you need it not, but that I may not be misunderstood. The most enlightened and active zeal for the dissenting interest, and the most unreserved freedom in the declaration of our sentiments upon every proper occasion, is in no respect inconsistent with a perfect catholicism of disposition, and with every proper degree of attention and regard to the

the members of the established church to which their character and rank in society entitles them. The unnecessary and unchristian bitterness of invective, in which some individuals, among the dissenters, have indulged themselves, when speaking of the national church, has brought a general, but I hope, an unmerited odium upon the whole body. If our cause be that of truth, it does not need so dishonourable a support; if it be not, it cannot be protected by it. And if any one think that the character of a christian or of a Christian Minister, be inconsistent with the manners of a gentleman, let him read St. Paul's epistle to Philemon, and blush.

Permit me to add one hint more under this head. Be not ashamed of your brethren in the Ministry, whose behaviour is upon the whole correspondent to their character and office, though there may be circumstances attending them which may expose them to the neglect, or even the derision of the world. He that receiveth the faithful Ministers of Christ, receiveth him that sent them, and shall in no wise lose his reward.

I now proceed to remark that another sense which the Apostle's expression will bear, is
that

that which our translators have given it, and which also insinuates a very important advice, which I beg leave to recommend to your attention. Approve yourself a workman that *needeth not to be ashamed*. Conduct yourself with that prudence and fortitude, with that fidelity, activity, and zeal, with that meekness and charity in the discharge of your ministry, that you may have no reason to be ashamed in the presence either of your people, of your brethren, or even of your divine Master himself; that the people of your charge, so far from having reason to reproach you with an intentional neglect of duty, may find growing cause to esteem and honour you highly in love for your work's sake, and for the very tender affectionate attention you pay to their immortal interests; that your brethren in the ministry may view your conduct with approbation and delight, and may be animated by your example and success, to correspondent faithfulness and zeal; and that your divine Master, in the great day of his final appearance, may pronounce upon you, Well done, good and faithful servant! And may reward your benevolent labours with a crown of distinguished and never fading lustre.

I will barely hint at another sense in which the Apostle's advice to his friend may be understood. Approve yourself a workman that *maketh not ashamed*. Discharge your ministerial duty in such a manner as to reflect honour upon your own character, upon the Christian name, upon the Pastoral Office, upon the respectable Society with which you are connected, and, if I may venture to use the expression, upon your divine Master himself, in whose cause you are embarked. And let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven.

I now advance to the third head of advice which the text contains, and with respect to which I have in some degree anticipated myself, viz.

Concerning the means which it will be necessary to adopt for the attainment of the important ends of the Ministerial office, expressed by the Apostle in the comprehensive words, *rightly dividing the word of truth*.

This expression has, by some, been supposed to allude to the care of the priest in the separation of

of the parts of the victim; by others, to the sagacity of the Scribes, in the division of the law into proper sections; and by others again, to the wisdom and faithfulness of the steward in the distribution of meat to the household which he superintends. Whatever the allusion be, the expression itself is very general, and the drift of the Apostle's advice to his friend undoubtedly is, that he should treat the truths of divine revelation in such a manner as would be best calculated to answer the important purposes of the Ministry, to enlighten the understanding, to improve the heart, and to make men wise to eternal salvation.

In order to this, it is necessary that a Minister should have a comprehensive view of natural and revealed religion; that the evidences of divine revelation should be familiar to his mind; that he should be well satisfied of its truth; that he should be well acquainted with its contents; that he should be well apprized of the vast importance of the discoveries of the gospel; that he should have enlarged apprehensions of the wisdom and mercy of God, as displayed in the grand scheme of redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ; and in a word, that he should be a Scribe well instructed in the word of truth.

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For the acquisition of this valuable knowledge, a faithful Minister will think no pains too great, and will search the scriptures daily with diligence and impartiality, firmly persuaded, that whatever God has thought fit to reveal, must be of the highest importance for man to learn; and that attention to the discoveries of divine revelation is a duty peculiarly indispensable in the Christian Minister.

It is also absolutely requisite that a Minister of Christ should be deeply impressed with the principles of the gospel; that his example, like a polished mirror, should reflect a bright image of the glory of Christ ^(a); that he should be inspired with an ardent zeal for the truth as it is in Jesus, and with an earnest desire to diffuse the knowledge of it in the world; that his whole soul should be possessed with veneration and love to the Supreme Being; that his heart should glow with gratitude to the Redeemer for his unparalleled condescension and compassion, exhibited in his incarnation, his life, and his sufferings; that he should be animated with the most diffusive benevolence to his fellow creatures; and that he should be impressed with a deep and

^a 2 Cor. iii. 18. in the original.

and tender concern for the salvation of souls, and especially of those immediately under his pastoral care ; that he should count all things but loss, and not hold even life itself dear, so that he may finish his course with joy, and fulfil the great ends of the ministry, with which he is invested.

It must be a principal object of his attention and concern, to disseminate the principles of the gospel in the hearts and lives of his hearers ; and in order to this, it should be his care to dispense the word of truth with judgment and gravity ; not in a loose, inconsiderate, incoherent manner ; but with that decency and dignity which becomes the oracles of the living God. He should dispense it with plainness, simplicity, and faithfulness ; not adulterating the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, as in the presence of God he must speak in Jesus Christ. He should dispense it with courage, and with zeal, in no wise intimidated by difficulty or opposition, and never thinking that he can be too fervent, or too laborious in his great Master's service, or in promoting the best interest of the souls committed to his care. He should dispense the word of truth with affection, so
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that it may evidently appear to his hearers that it is not honour, that it is not interest, that it is not popularity and applause that he covets; but that it is his great concern to save himself, and those that hear him; that he seeks not their's, but them, and that there is nothing he has so much at heart as to be instrumental in promoting their eternal welfare. He should dispense the word of truth, not like a heathen moralist, but like a Christian Minister, enforcing the precepts of morality by the peculiar motives of the gospel; not appearing to be ashamed of those truths which he in his heart believes to be effectual to the salvation of those, by whom they are cordially received and practically regarded. Let me add, that the Christian Minister should so dispense the word of truth, as not only to please the ear, to amuse the imagination, or to inform the judgment; but to reach mens hearts and bosoms, to rouse them from the lethargy of vanity, folly, and vice; and excite them to a most serious and habitual concern to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Lastly, the word of truth should be treated practically; and though it be necessary sometimes to insist upon points of doctrine for the establishment of important truth,

truth, and to guard against pernicious error; yet those truths ought undoubtedly to be principally insisted upon, which bear the most direct reference to practice, and the importance of every doctrine should be judged of by its practical tendency, the grand object of the gospel being to mend the heart, and to form men to holiness, in order to qualify them for, and to train them up to happiness.

The word of truth should be dispensed at all convenient times, and the pulpit is not the only place where the Christian Minister should be solicitous to diffuse the knowledge and the vital energy of the gospel. "Preach the word (saith the Apostle to Timothy) be instant in season and out of season." Wherever there is an opportunity of doing good, and of fulfilling the important purposes of the ministry, it should be joyfully embraced: The instructions of the Christian Minister should be adapted to the different ages, cases, characters, and circumstances of his hearers, as they are young or old, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, prosperous or afflicted, chearful, vigorous, active Christians, or feeble, tempted, and depressed; nor will he disdain the humble office which his divine Master
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has assigned him, to feed the lambs of the flock. The faithful Minister will study to conduct the devotional exercises of religion with propriety, with simplicity, and with the genuine spirit of rational and fervent piety. He will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also. And he will esteem it one of the most important duties of his office, to visit the sick, the aged, the infirm, the poor, and the afflicted; to administer the consolations of the gospel to them, and to assist them in pouring out the sorrows of their hearts at the throne of grace. He will be solicitous to support and give efficacy to his doctrine, by exhibiting a fair example of faith and purity, of zeal and charity, and of that serenity and habitual cheerfulness of mind, which a good conscience, genuine devotion, and the hope of the gospel can alone inspire. — I shall only add, that the faithful Minister of the gospel will also be a man of prayer; that he will daily and fervently implore the assistance of the Father of lights; that he will resign himself to his direction; that he will frequently and affectionately bear the interests of his people upon his heart at the throne of grace, and that he will earnestly recommend his ministerial labours amongst them, to that blessing of God, without which Paul shall plant, and Apollos water in vain. And

And now, Sir, permit me earnestly to intreat you, and in the presence of this Christian society which is intrusted to the charge of you, and your reverend and respectable colleagues, in the presence of our venerable brethren who are assembled upon this solemn occasion, in the presence of our divine Master who shed his precious blood for the redemption of men, and in the presence of the great God himself, in whose sight it is of the highest moment that you stand approved; permit me to charge and to conjure you, that you steadily persevere in the course described, so far as it approves itself to your understanding to be scriptural and just, and the proper line of conduct for a faithful Minister of the gospel.—I will not presume to say, that in so doing you will ensure success. For God, infinitely wise and good, that he may shew the excellence of his own power, and hide pride from man, sometimes declines to make use of those instruments, which to our limited apprehensions appear best qualified for carrying on his glorious work. But this I will venture to affirm, that by acting in this manner you will use the most probable means of securing the respect of the world, the esteem of your brethren,

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the affection of your people, the blessing of God, and the success of your exertions. Few who have thus laboured have laboured in vain. And what is our hope, our joy, yea, the crown of our rejoicing? Is it not the success of our labours in the salvation of the souls intrusted to our care, and a glorious and happy interview with them at the tribunal of Jesus Christ? The human mind cannot conceive a satisfaction more exquisite and sublime.

But, Sir, if the success of your ministry should not correspond with the activity of your zeal, and the ardour of your benevolence, be not discouraged. You remember that the great Son of God himself, when in his incarnate form, he condescended to be a preacher of truth and righteousness, saw reason to complain, Who hath believed our report? and, the servant is not greater than his Lord. You will still have the testimony of an approving conscience, which is of more worth than worlds. Nor will you want the approbation of your divine Master. The souls that are lost under your ministry, notwithstanding your faithful instructions and admonitions, will not be placed to your account. You will be a sweet
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perfume to God in those that perish, as well as in those that are saved. You serve a wise, a just, and a beneficent Master; who, if he declines the offers of your service in building up his spiritual temple, will nevertheless applaud the generous thought and purpose of your heart. Your work shall still be with the Lord, and your reward with your God.

F I N I S.

